

Thank you, Senator Shapiro and members:

My name is Karen Ellis, and I am a veteran school board member from Richardson ISD. Senator Shapiro (and Senator Carona), I bring you greetings from home and hope you can come home soon. I speak for my district, and know school boards around the state echo our deep appreciation for your efforts on our behalf throughout regular session, and now in this special session. It is a privilege to speak with you today in support of the seriously needed flexibilities in SB 8.

Let's start with furloughs. What I'd actually like to do is dispel a myth that has been running rampant around town for months, and I welcome the teachers groups that are here today and pray they hear these words. Because here is the truth of the matter: By allowing districts to temporarily furlough employees, jobs are actually saved, not lost. Let me repeat, by allowing districts to temporarily furlough employees, jobs are saved, not lost!

In Richardson we did the math. If we furloughed every employee for one day – and that's how we would do it, top to bottom, superintendent included – just one day, we would save about \$950,000 which equates to about 21 teacher jobs. Temporary furloughs can save jobs by reducing payroll expenses.

In Richardson, we actually surveyed our employees for their input on budget reductions, and Senator Shapiro, I bet when you were a teacher at Richardson High School you would have been among the whopping 75% they said they would take a furlough day, or days, in order to save jobs. This is the new reality districts across the state are facing. Please, please, please hear me. School districts desperately need the flexibility to furlough employees to reduce payroll expenses.

I would also like to voice support of removing the "last-in-first-out" requirement for continuing contract teachers. So often throughout the last couple of sessions the discussion has revolved around performance. This provision gives the flexibility to make personnel decisions based on performance rather than seniority. It would allow the principal – the one closest to the classroom who sees where the rubber meets the road – to make the decisions about which teachers to retain. School districts are not going to balance our budgets on the backs of

our teachers. When all is said and done, it ultimately comes down to a teacher and a student in a classroom. It's where the magic happens. However, we (and I mean administrators, Boards and teachers) are willing to work together for creative ways to protect jobs. No one wants to see their colleagues fired, but we do want to protect the most effective teacher in the classroom and are willing to sacrifice and trim to keep our students engaged in their education.

I'd love to talk about salaries and moving the 45 day notice of nonrenewal until 10 days before the end of the school year, but my time is up. Thank you for this opportunity to express support for SB 8. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.